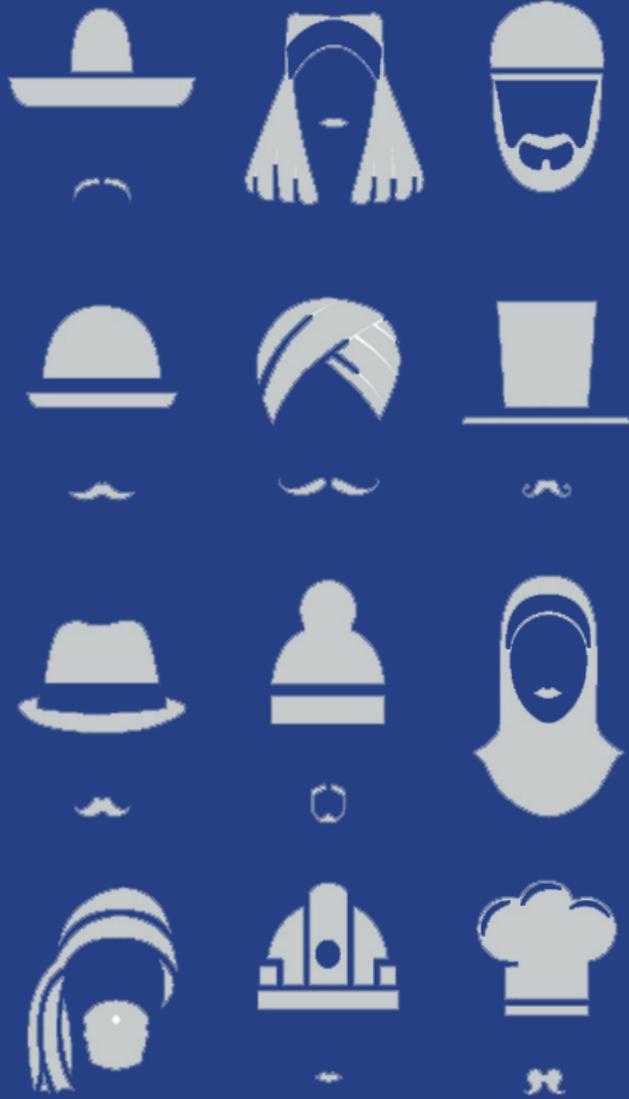


Diversity Matters

Multi-Faith Room Provision in
the Workplace



A Guide to Best Practice Multi-Faith Room Design
for employers, property owners/managers, facilities
managers, architects, building designers, specifiers, and
interior designers.



WuduMate®



Acknowledgements & Endorsements

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the following organisations who have provided invaluable advice and guidance in the preparation of Diversity Matters:

- The Regents Park Mosque, London
- Legal advice from B. P. Collins Solicitors

In addition to advice and guidance the following gave our guide their endorsement:

- Mohammed M. Rai of the Hounslow Mosque (Deceased)
- The Rt. Revd. Stephen Oliver, Bishop of Stepney (Church of England)
- Naresh Saraswat, Minister of Religion at the Hindu Temple, Slough
- The Rev. Michael Binstock as Jewish Faith Advisor to HM Prison Service
- Rabbi Dr Michael Shire, Vice-Principal, Leo Baeck College

International Applicability of Diversity Matters

A well-documented past of international forays, in the days of the British Empire, is largely responsible for the UK today having a truly multi-racial society back at home. The United Kingdom is probably the most advanced country in the world in terms of its acceptance of diversity in the workplace, although much of the developed world is following closely behind, with largely similar approaches to Health & Safety and integration of minority groups in the workplace.

This version of 'Diversity Matters' (V7 2016), has been prepared based primarily on accepted UK policies and references to UK legislation, much of the content however will apply similarly to other countries, if not today, almost certainly in the future.

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1. The Challenge of Diversity

Across the world populations are increasingly multicultural and multi-ethnic. Our places of work, hospitals, universities and colleges are emphatically multicultural. It is a well established reality that staff, patients, students and visitors can be expected to come from a dazzling array of cultural backgrounds and faiths and as such, we must accommodate them.

Such diversity raises a range of challenges for employers, property owners and managers, facilities managers, architects and interior designers. Not least of these challenges is the moral and, increasingly, legal obligation to recognise social and religious diversity in the facilities provided in the workplace. Increasingly legislation extends these obligations, which previously only applied to employers, to include all providers of goods, facilities and services to public bodies and private organisations.

In the UK, The Confederation of British Industry notes:

“Employers recognise the benefits of effective diversity and inclusion policies, and the business community supports positive action. The one resource that in today’s knowledge based economy gives sustainable competitive advantage is the skills, understanding and experience of people. Discrimination in employment, wherever it exists, squanders effort, ideas and, ultimately, business sales. It leads to wasted potential, wasted labour and wasted revenues”.

Although there is no shortage of information on the general topic of diversity there is a distinct lack of practical, down-to-earth guidance on what that actually means in our places of work and study and the places we visit such as hospitals and other public buildings. Typical grey areas include:

- What are the day-to-day implications of diversity we need to grapple with when considering the provisions made for staff and visitors?
- How do we ‘design in’ to our new buildings the demands of diversity?
- How can we try to reflect these demands and expectations in existing buildings?

This guide is intended to try to meet this information need.

In particular this guide is intended to provide practical guidance on the provision of multi-faith facilities to those responsible for the design and management of public and commercial properties and to employers who all have a duty of care for an increasingly multi-ethnic workforce.

Most western countries seem to be following the UK's more prescriptive policies with regard to diversity in the workplace. This guide therefore provides a suitable benchmark for other countries to follow.

2. Organisations are Beginning to Understand

The provision of equality statements in employment Terms & Conditions is commonplace – reflecting an employer's statutory obligations. However, such considerate HR policies should not simply be driven by the need to meet legal obligations. Being proactive about the diverse needs of a culturally diverse workforce can produce real practical and financial payback. Reduced absenteeism and staff turnover, improved morale and loyalty can be the very tangible results of enlightened staff relations.

Gymnasias, canteens and staff lounges are already recognised as good practice by many large employers who see practical and commercial benefits in improving the ways they cater for the well-being of their staff and visitors, by providing great places to work, enticing the best employees.

Some businesses go further:

- Recreation facilities with games and musical instruments
- Sports facilities
- Sophisticated "relaxation chambers"

Businesses are increasingly providing facilities for the "physical" well being of the staff. Fewer companies or public service organisations, however, have given the same thought to the spiritual needs of their diverse workforce and visitors.

In today's pressured world there is real need for people to have a quiet space for reflection, meditation or prayer to which they can retreat when necessary during the day. If such space is to be used for prayer it must, by law, be available to everyone without discrimination. It must, therefore, provide for the traditions of different faiths without causing offence to any. Hence the concept of a multi-faith room or quiet room as it is sometimes called.

Since the most recent UK legislation includes 'lack of faith or belief' in its definition of religion and belief for the purpose of establishing discrimination, such a room would potentially benefit any and every individual by providing a clean, quiet space while avoiding the appearance of different treatment for different people with different beliefs.

- Most hospitals already provide a variety of multi-faith facilities for use by staff, patients, their relatives and visitors. Such facilities are, of course, especially relevant where there is personal suffering and distress. An opportunity for those affected by such circumstances to spend time in solitude in a dignified environment can be a vital part of the healing process – both physical and spiritual.
- Courts are places where stress can be alleviated by a few moments of quiet contemplation or prayer. Furthermore some faiths – including Islam – require spiritual preparation before the taking of an oath on their holy book. Such preparation might also involve ritual ablution.
- Government buildings – both national and local – such as prisons and libraries are installing multi-faith facilities – for a while converting redundant smoking rooms but now needing to find other spaces.
- Airports generally provide prayer and ritual washing facilities for both travellers and staff.
- The armed forces are increasingly providing for the spiritual needs of members of all religions – both in barracks and in the field, and also to accommodate muslim visitors from overseas who visit these facilities for training.
- Universities and colleges are leaders in encouraging multicultural tolerance and understanding. Faith rooms not only provide for worship by different faith groups, they also encourage interaction and mutual understanding.
- Large corporations and multinational employers are becoming more faith aware.

3. Legislative Influences

Each country has its own laws relevant to the provision of facilities for prayer and/or quiet contemplation both in private and public sector buildings. Whether these be termed prayer, multi-faith or quiet rooms, buildings ranging from hospitals and universities to offices and airports are increasingly featuring these facilities for employees and visitors. Countries in the EU are subject to a degree of uniformity in this area, however member countries usually adopt their own regulations rather than rely on the relevant EU directive. As a result, detailed provisions can vary from one EU country to another. Countries outside the EU are increasingly introducing both mandatory requirements, and non-prescriptive guidance. Readers should therefore inform themselves of their own country's legislative requirements and standards of good practice.

4. Multi-Faith Provision

In many countries, employers have a legal obligation to make allowance and provision for all employees to carry out their particular religious practices where practicable.

Physical and financial constraints mean that it is simply not realistic for an organisation to consider the provision of separate facilities for every major faith.

A multi-faith room is therefore a pragmatic and readily-attainable solution. Because of the sheer number of religious faiths and denominations there can be no single formula for a perfect multi-faith room. 'One size fits all' is not a meaningful solution; in the great majority of situations the actual characteristics of a multi-faith room will inevitably be something of a compromise.

Whilst such a compromise may well fall short of being 'ideal' for every particular faith, it should be recognised by users as a genuine and really worthwhile attempt by that organisation to respect and cater for the religious needs of staff and visitors (whether they be casual or longer-term visitors such as students, patients or inmates).

5. Faith Room Design

5.1 Location

Different faiths have different approaches to ritual duties and performance. For example, whilst Christianity is not demanding in terms of specific daily rituals, Islam requires Salat (prayers) be performed five times a day. This inevitably means that for proper observance, Salat will almost certainly occur at times during the ordinary working day.

It therefore makes commercial sense to try to minimise the amount of unproductive time involved in getting to, using and returning from the prayer facilities provided. This can be achieved by having a multi-faith room close to individual work locations, in the same way as toilets are distributed for convenience around buildings.

Ideally, multi-building campuses should have a faith-room in each building, multi-floored offices should have a faith room on each floor and a cost-benefit analysis would clearly demonstrate whether or not such an arrangement was justified with an overriding benefit being a saving of unproductive time, traveling to and from such facilities.

5.2 Size

The size of a faith-room should be commensurate with the number of people likely to use it at any one time. The requirements of Muslims are the most predictable since their daily prayer routines take place at fixed times of the day depending on the times of sunrise and sunset. Furthermore Salat follows a fairly fixed formula. There are also defined times for Jewish prayer at least twice a day, again determined by dawn and dusk. However there is more flexibility allowed to Jews who can usually pray early in the morning before work and in the later afternoon or early evening after work.

Because the times for muslim Salat are fixed, the faith room needs to be large enough to accommodate all muslim staff at one time. Even though it is unlikely that all Muslim staff will perform Salat every day, they are likely to on Friday's and on other days of Islamic significance (Eid and Ramadan).

Christians and adherents to most other faiths have no rigidly fixed times for daily prayers, so it is reasonable to assume that they would not choose to use the faith room during the times of Salat.

Each Muslim requires approximately 1.2x0.6m (4' x 2') of floor space on which to perform Salat. This enables them to place their forehead on the floor whilst kneeling, just touching shoulders with those on either side of them.

Provision needs to be made for ritual ablution prior to Salat and this is discussed separately below (refer to section 6).

Ideally, entirely separate facilities for prayer and washing should be provided for Muslim men and women. However, if men and women are to share the same prayer room, women would normally stand behind the men separated by a curtain. In order to cater for varying numbers of men and women the curtain should be mounted on a moveable rail so the position of the partition can be varied. Alternatively, if no women are present, it can be removed altogether.

This same curtain partition would also be used by traditional Jews who pray publicly in a quorum of 10 men separated from any women present.

It is entirely inappropriate to provide communal male and female washing facilities. Whether a single faith room or separate male/female rooms are provided there will need to be separate washing facilities unless the washing facility is behind a locked door to ensure privacy for women.

5.3 Orientation

For most faiths there is no fixed direction in which prayers should be said although the cruciform footprint of older Christian churches follow a predictable orientation. Jews generally pray facing east towards Jerusalem. For Muslims however, it is mandatory for them to face the Ka'ba during prayer. This is an ancient religious site located in the city of Mecca.

Although the prayer room itself does not have to be orientated in any particular way there should be some indication in it of which direction each wall faces – specifically the direction of east and of the city of Mecca. The exact direction of Mecca obviously depends on where in the world/country the faith room is located. A compass is available from most Muslim bookshops which indicates the exact direction of Mecca. An arrow, positioned on the ceiling, is also recognised as a practical means of indicating this direction.

Ideally, the entrance of the room should be situated to enable worshippers to enter and leave the room without passing in front of those at prayer.

5.3.1 Shoe Storage

Cleanliness plays a significant part in most religions but some faiths have a specific requirement for shoes to be removed before prayer. All visitors to the prayer room should therefore be encouraged to remove their shoes before entering. A sign to this effect should be displayed, suggesting to those who do not wish to remove their shoes that, out of respect to others, they should avoid walking across the main prayer area.

There should be an area where shoes can be removed prior to entering the faith room or associated washing areas, and a rack in which visitors can leave their footwear once removed.



made-to-measure racks available -
refer wudumate.com

5.3.2 Toilet Facilities

It is not mandatory to have toilet facilities installed within a prayer room environment, however if they are included, it should be remembered that Muslims should not use a toilet facing the same direction in which they pray, i.e. facing Mecca.

In all environments however, where toilet facilities are made available for public use, it should be noted that some ethnic groups (including Muslims) require to wash their personal parts with water after using the toilet. In other words, they require a private bidet facility which is not always in the workplace, (please refer to section 6.2 Personal Washing).

5.4 Fixtures and Fittings in the Prayer Room

5.4.1 Religious Icons

The permanent presence of religious icons for one particular faith group can offend other religious groups and can create an atmosphere of 'possession' by one group. If the use of icons is specifically required by a particular group there should be a cupboard for their storage when not in use. Ideally there should be a minimum of four such cupboards (to represent four of the major faiths). There are cupboards available which look like bookshelves from the front, but when opened up have different designs inside; once the outer doors of the cupboard are opened, internal designs can include:

- A shelf-like Christian altar, on which other Christian artefacts can be placed such as a cross or Bible, with cupboard space underneath.
- Muslim designs and graphics to look like a mini-mosque; appropriate lighting can also be installed in the cupboard.

Please contact info@wudumate.com.

5.4.2 Furniture

Furniture is not a mandatory requirement in a multi-faith facility. However, it is appropriate to provide some informal seating for more casual visitors to use when reading or simply sitting in contemplation. A simple table should also be provided for items required by some faiths as part of their ritual. Christians, for example, would appreciate the presence of a cross or crucifix to denote an altar.

Jews might use a table for study, which is usual for them before, during or after prayer.

Ideally any furniture should be capable of being easily moved away from the central area of prayer. Such relocation should not be to the wall which people of particular faiths would face in prayer. The use of benches would be acceptable but there should also be some movable chairs for those who wish to sit at the table, or who find it difficult to kneel.

The use of leather furniture should be avoided since Hindus cannot accept leather in their places of worship.

5.4.3 Floor Covering

The covering of the prayer room floor should be in a neutral colour so as to be acceptable to all faiths. It needs to be easy to keep clean.

5.4.4 Books and Religious Reading

Books and other religious publications such as calendars could be made available but nothing should be left in permanent view so as not to offend those of other faiths. It should instead be stored on a shelf or preferably in a cupboard.

Material for promotional or advertising purposes should not be allowed.

Leather covered books should be avoided due to the offence caused by cow hide in religions such as Hinduism (see 5.4.2 above).

5.4.5 Lighting

The prayer and washing areas should be well lit – ideally, in today's environmentally-aware world, with energy saving devices.

5.4.6 Windows

Windows will assist with the lighting and natural ventilation of the prayer room but users might prefer obscure glass to be used. Stained glass windows can add to the aesthetic appeal of the decor but the subject matter should be neutral with no religious connotations.

5.4.7 Other

Prayer caps, mats, cushions and other items should be kept in cupboards so as not to cause offence.

The burning of incense may contravene fire regulations and run the risk of activating smoke sensors and should be strongly discouraged.

If the use of candles is to be allowed, this should be closely monitored and supervised. Appropriate legislation must be consulted and a risk assessment undertaken. Ideally no more than one or two candles should be lit at any one time and should not be 'religion-specific'. (refer to 5.4.1).

5.4.8 Notices

Contact details and addresses of other local places of worship such as churches, mosques and synagogues should be available. If the faith room is to be locked when not in use, a notice to this effect should be posted outside. Statutory notices such as "No Smoking", "Fire Exit", "No Naked Flames" and any others that may apply to fire regulations and other legislation should be displayed.

6. Ritual Washing

Most religions value cleanliness with some practicing ritual washing before prayer or mealtimes.

Christian monks used to practice ritual washing in a communal wash area known as a Lavatorium. Although generally abandoned, this custom has been replaced by the washing of hands before meals.

Some observant Jews will wash their hands before prayer as a ritual undertaken as a devotion to God and an act of symbolic self purification.

6.1 Wudu

Probably the most widely performed act of ritual cleansing is wudu, performed by Muslims before Salat (prayers). Wudu shows respect to God by bringing the adherent to prayer in a purified state.

The actual practice of wudu varies between different Muslim groups, generally, however, it requires the washing of the face, head, hands, arms and feet. Clean running water must be used except in some circumstances where no water is available.

Wudu can take up to about three and a half minutes, and thus an appropriate number of washing stations need to be provided. Ideally excessive queuing is to be avoided, which from the wudu performer's point of view can be frustrating and which, from the employer's point of view, is an unnecessary and unproductive use of time.

Cleanliness is an extremely important aspect of Islam, and wudu should be undertaken in clean running water. Contact with static or grey (dirty) water can invalidate the wudu ritual and should be prevented in any washing facility provided.

Imagine...

Imagine you are a conscientious, hard-working employee of a supermarket chain. You are a Muslim and in your daily life you try hard to observe the quite demanding duties of ritual washing and prayer.

But it's not easy.

Your employer is sympathetic and tries to understand. But he does not really quite appreciate how difficult it is for you to find somewhere appropriate to carry out your religious duties in a quiet, dignified way which meets the requirements of your faith and personal aspirations without causing offence or distraction to colleagues.

You put up with having to wash your feet in the staff toilet in a wash hand basin over two feet high. You cringe when you put your bare foot back on the floor which is by now wet with unclean water and dangerously slippery. You brace yourself for the walk past non-Muslim staff to the storage area where you are allowed to say your prayers with the other four Muslims who work in the supermarket.

Your employer is really good to be so sympathetic. But you believe another employer not far away has gone even further to accommodate the religious needs of his multi-ethnic staff.

Maybe you should make some enquiries...



Could this be your washroom?

6.1.1 Wudu in Washrooms

Many corporate bodies remain unaware of the importance of the washing ritual to Muslims and do not provide appropriate washing facilities. This leaves observant Muslims having, for example, to wash their feet in an ordinary hand basin in a toilet area. This not only shows a casual disregard for their needs but also creates very real and obvious health and safety hazards.

A solution is to provide tailor-made washing facilities which could be more closely associated with the prayer room – e.g. completely separate from toilet areas.

6.1.2 The Water

The water used in ritual cleansing must be clean and flowing. Although not mandatory in colder climates it should be pre-mixed to an ambient temperature before being dispensed.

6.1.3 WuduMate®

The WuduMate is a unique range of washing appliances specifically designed for the Muslim ritual of wudu. Designed and manufactured by the Specialist Washing Co., trading as WuduMate of the United Kingdom, a number of models are available for use in the workplace, meeting all of the aforementioned requirements.

More information is available at www.wudumate.com.





6.1.4 Disabled Facilities

It is extremely difficult to configure a disabled facility for wudu that caters for every type of disability. Unlike disabled toilets where in many countries there is a published standard, (in the UK the DOC M standard for disabled toilet facilities in the workplace) there is rarely a standard for the provision of disabled wudu facilities. It is suggested therefore, that whatever arrangements are finally made for disabled wudu, they should at least demonstrate 'best efforts'. If it can be demonstrated that 'best efforts' have been made to cater for the needs of the disabled in a wudu facility, these are extremely likely to be accepted by any reasonable disability audit. There are a number of WuduMate configurations which can be used to assist in this.

It is important to check whether a country has any documented standards for providing wudu facilities for disabled people in commercial buildings, and if not, the above mentioned approach would be sensible.

Each WuduMate model can be configured for disabled use, some facilitating wheelchair access better than others:

- WuduMate Modular – The WuduMate Modular can be configured without its stool for standing wudu, and as long as the WuduMate Modular is fitted flush with the floor, this can enable wheel chair access.
- WuduMate Classic – Requires wheelchair users to relocate to the WuduMate-C seat.
- WuduMate-Compact – The WuduMate modular stool can be moved aside to enable wheelchair access.

6.1.5 Water Mixer

Destroying the bacteria that causes Legionnaires' Disease requires water to be heated to at least 140°F (60°C) at which point third-degree burns can be caused to children in just one second and to adults in no more than five seconds.

Many deaths are caused by scalding – in the UK alone it causes an average of twelve deaths a year. In the US approximately 25,000 hospitalisations a year are directly attributable to dangerously-hot tap water, and 34 deaths occur in homes alone.

In order to accommodate Legionnaires prevention, and at the same time avoid the risks of excessively hot water being delivered at the tap, an automatic Thermostatic Mixing Valve (TMV) should be used. If it is possible that the wudu facility is used irregularly, in which case the sensor driven tap should also be equipped with a 'flush through' facility to ensure Legionnaires' bacteria cannot reside within.

6.1.6 Taps

It is now generally accepted that in public buildings automatic and sensor-driven taps can be used, despite the fact they are expensive.

These dispense ready-mixed water without the user having to touch the tap and are therefore hygienic, but also environmentally friendly since they turn off automatically.

Such taps are also consistent with religious washing rituals which can be invalidated if the user comes into contact with "grey" water.

It should be noted however, that sensor driven taps do require periodic maintenance, and where this is not readily available, it may be wise to avoid them.

6.1.7 Floor

The floor of any washing room facility likely to be affected by water spillage should be tiled or covered with linoleum to prevent damage, ideally with an anti-slip surface. This may be a legal requirement in some countries, but even if not anti-slip surfaces will reduce the potential risk of accident claims.

6.1.8 Matting

It is important to have some means of drying the feet after washing so as not to take excess water and associated bacteria into the prayer area. When performing Salat it is necessary to place the head against the floor and is believed that many get infected with bacteria at this point, especially the elderly, resulting in asthma and other respiratory conditions. One means of helping to dry the feet after wudu is to provide specially designed anti-bacterial, anti-slip matting which also helps dry the feet before entering the prayer hall.

(refer www.wudumatecommercial.com)



6.1.9 Walls

Walls should ideally be tiled where water is likely to splash – typically behind and around washing appliances. This assists in cleaning, reduces mildew and mould growth, and prevents water damage.

6.1.10 Drying Facilities

Drying facilities are not mandatory but it is preferable to provide them. These should be hygienic to use – such as paper towels or hot air dryer to stop the ingress of water being carried into the prayer hall and ideally available for hand, arm, face and feet.

6.1.11 Foot Dryers

Automatic foot dryers are becoming increasingly more popular, such as those supplied by WuduMate (www.wudumate.com)

6.1.12 Waste Disposal

If paper towels are to be used receptacles should be provided for their disposal.



6.1.13 Soap

Soap should be available for anyone who wishes to use it. As in other public environments soap should ideally be dispensed from an automatic dispenser to improve hygiene and remove slip-hazards caused by loose bars of soap. Many soaps contain animal fat so specific compliant halal soaps should be sourced (refer www.wudumatecommercial.com)

6.2 Personal Washing

Some faiths require the washing of intimate parts after using the toilet, which is difficult to accomplish when away from home where bidet facilities are rarely provided. The personal nature of a bidet facility is that it needs to be located in a private place; this is rarely practical or cost effective in a commercial environment. If a traditional bidet is installed, there needs to be a one to one relationship between bidet to toilet, with both being located behind a locked door to ensure privacy; this is rarely cost effective in a commercial or public sector environment. In order to undertake this personal washing when away from home therefore, some faiths currently will fill whatever container they can find (often a cup or water bottle) with water and take this to the privacy of a toilet cubicle to undertake this personal ablution act in private; this is often environmentally unfriendly due to wastage of plastic containers or if the containers are returned after use, (such as cup to a canteen) this is potentially a hygiene issue. When bottles are left in toilet areas they can fall over causing spillages and this can be a slip hazard. Several other options for personal washing in the commercial environment can be considered such as the following:

6.2.1 Douches

In many Muslim countries, hand showers (douches) are installed behind all public toilet pans, enabling washing of private parts with water (as with a bidet) after toilet use. The disadvantage of douches in a public environment is that they can be (and often are) stolen for home use, and careless use may cause spilt water that could pose a slip hazard.

It must also be noted that most douche products will drip water when left under pressure, i.e. not turned off at the mains supply. To alleviate this, it is recommended that installations include an isolator valve for each user to use before/after use, but on the assumption this will not happen, it is recommended that each douche is partnered with an adequate floor drain.

6.2.2 Bidet Toilets

There are a number of electronic bidet toilets available in the market, primarily designed for medical applications in the health sector, but these can provide a bidet facility in a public toilet environment as well. For additional information contact info@wudumate.com.

6.2.3 Integrated Bidet

In some countries such as Turkey, toilets are available with a bidet spout installed in the rim of the bowl, operated by a conveniently located hand operated isolator valve (refer wudumate.com).

6.2.4 Personal Bidets

For environments where the installation and maintenance of douches and bidet toilets is impractical, facilities managers may consider the provision of personal bidets for staff and visitors.

The WuduMate Personal is a low cost, reusable, plastic container specifically designed for use as a personal bidet, and an excellent solution where no other suitable appliance is available. The WuduMate Personal can be conveniently folded after use and carried compactly in its own self-sealable pouch, negating the need for random use of bottles and other unsuitable containers. (Refer wudumate.com)

7. Prayer Room Usage

7.1 Legal

As with any public environment, a prayer room and associated washing facilities must comply with prevailing legislation.

Smoking must be prevented in countries where it is now illegal in public places. The consumption of alcohol or illegal substances should not be permitted.

7.2 Maintenance and Cleaning

All faiths respect cleanliness so the faith room and washing areas should be kept clean and, ideally, odour-free at all times.

Odours can be offensive to members of some religions when praying, so care should be taken when choosing cleaning materials.

Any soaps and fragrances used in the ablution area should ideally be free of animal products and alcohol. Soaps should be provided in a dispenser for hygiene purposes. Pleasant fragrances are ideal when there is a risk of outside odours seeping into the ablution area. The room should be well ventilated and food of any sort should be discouraged. (Refer www.wudumate.com for halal compliant products)

Any promotional or advertising material should be removed.

7.3 Miscellaneous

Ideally a faith room should be open for use by anyone at any time but should not be used for meetings or study not associated with prayer or the pursuit of any religious belief thus always available for its primary purpose.

However, for security and practical reasons this may not be possible. Depending on its location the facility might need to be locked when not in use, with access only being permitted by arrangement.

Users should always respect the feelings of others in terms of their dress and general behaviour.

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EXAMPLES OF
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